



BOROUGH OF ILKESTON.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

To the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Borough of Ilkeston.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my report for the year ending December 31st, 1896. There have been 367 deaths during the year, giving a death-rate of 15·9 on the estimated population of 23,000—176 were males, and 191 females. This is the lowest death-rate obtained for some years past, as will be seen by comparing the following:—

1892	Death Rate	...	...	...	...	17·2
1893	" "	...	...	...	...	17·1
1894	" "	...	...	...	...	17·9
1895	" "	...	...	...	...	16·78
1896	" "	...	...	...	...	15·9

There was a zymotic death-rate of 2·2, compared with 1·1 for last year. This increase was due to the number of deaths from measles and whooping cough. The following is a classification of the causes of death:—

Enteric Fever	8	} Zymotic
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	2
Puerperal Fever	...	...	...	...	2
Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	1
Membranous Croup	...	...	...	...	3
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	1
Measles	...	...	...	...	20
Whooping Cough	10	}
Diarrhœa	...	...	...	...	4
Phthisis	...	...	...	...	11
Rheumatic Fever	1	}
Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy	...	...	...	...	54
Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	17
All other causes	202	

There have been 15 inquests during the year; 17 deaths have been uncertified by either a medical practitioner or a coroner. The following table shows the age-period at which death took place:—

Under 1 year	...	...	...	163	} Under 5—226	
1 year and under 5 years	...	...	...	63		
5	„	„	15	„	...	15
15	„	„	25	„	...	17
25	„	„	65	„	...	62
65 and upwards	...	...	...	...	47	

The number of births registered during the year was 835; of which 433 were males and 402 females. This gives a birth-rate of 36·3.

It is satisfactory to note that there has been a slight reduction in the infant mortality during the year 1896, compared with 1895; the infant mortality in 1896 being 195·2, against 199·4 in 1895. The reduction would have been more apparent but for the number of deaths caused by measles and whooping cough—no deaths occurring under these headings in 1895. This decrease I attribute mainly to the circulation of the dietary cards throughout the borough; and I agree with the suggestion of the County Medical Officer of Health in his comments on my action, in his annual report, that the registrar of births be provided with these dietary cards, and who would no doubt willingly give one to each parent at the time of the registration of the birth. We have still a very high infant mortality, as will be seen by the above figures, and we ought to adopt every means in our power to bring about a substantial decrease.

There have been 169 cases of infectious diseases notified during the year. They are as follows:—

Enteric Fever	80	} Total, 169
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	37
Puerperal Fever	...	...	...	6
Membranous Croup	...	...	...	3
Diphtheria	...	...	...	28
Erysipelas	...	...	...	15

Typhoid Fever.—Ilkeston, in common with many other towns, has shared in the rather extensive outbreak of Typhoid Fever in 1896; which year, with its very dry summer and rainy autumn, was most favourable for its development. It is a very serious matter to see so many cases of a practically preventable disease like typhoid occurring year after year in such numbers, and it shows that something must be radically at fault. The following figures show the number of cases reported since the adoption of the Notification Act in April, 1893:—

1893 (April to December)	...	90 cases reported.
1894 „ „	...	73 „ „
1895 (August to December)	...	24 „ „
1896 „ „	...	80 „ „

Apart from the sanitary requirements—such as a purer water supply, a better means of disposing of refuse, abolition of old-fashioned privies and middens, more frequent and regular emptying of pan closets—there is one means at your command for preventing these outbreaks of Typhoid Fever, and that is the immediate isolation of “first cases.” This has been proved over and over again, for it has been seen that where the “first cases” have not been immediately isolated, second, third, and even more cases have occurred in the same house; and, on the other hand, where the “first case” was immediately isolated in the Sanatorium, in not a single instance was a second case known to have occurred. From these facts the Council will see the great desirability of affording every facility for the ready admission of patients into the Sanatorium. It is a striking fact that out of the 80 cases reported, the large majority of which belonged to the poorer classes, only 19 of them were isolated in the Sanatorium. This would have been very different had the means of admission been easier. I have known cases which have been unable to pay the prescribed charges, and, consequently, have

remained at their homes, forming "foci" of infection, rather than be removed to the Sanatorium by the Relieving Officer's order, and be branded with the odious epithet of a "pauper patient." I therefore cannot too strongly urge upon you the necessity of having the admission to the Sanatorium free and unfettered to all cases.

It is to be expected that the number of cases of Typhoid Fever, as well as other infectious diseases, will be considerably reduced on the introduction of a purer water supply, and it is to be hoped that the Council will have the same assurances of a plentiful supply at their proposed new works as they have had of its good quality.

Scarlet Fever.—Thirty-seven cases were reported during the year, with two deaths. This shows a considerable decrease compared with last year.

Diphtheria.—Thirty cases of Diphtheria occurred ; with one death. The cases were chiefly of the "poisoned throat" variety, due to foul sanitary conditions. In one house, where three cases occurred, it was found that the waste-pipe from the bath-room was directly connected with the sewer, allowing a free entry of sewer gas into the house. This was immediately remedied.

Whooping Cough was very prevalent during the year, causing nine deaths.

Measles.—There was a wide-spread epidemic of measles in the last three months of the year. It seemed to be a continuation of the epidemic in Heanor and Langley Mill, originating, as it did, in the northern parts of the town, at a time when it was prevalent at the above-mentioned places. The disease rapidly spread throughout the borough, finally disappearing at the southern end. Of the number of cases which occurred I have no idea, as this disease is not notifiable here. Twenty deaths were caused by it, entirely from chest complications. This is not to be wondered at, considering the very severe and variable weather at the time of the outbreak.

The Health Committee are also very much handicapped in trying to stamp out such an epidemic, by the absolute indifference of many parents with regard to this disease ; some parents, I am told, going so far as to send their children to play with those of their neighbours who are infected with the disease, believing that an attack is inevitable, and that the sooner it is over the better.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN.—All the schools at one time or another were closed ; some of them for lengthened periods. The most radical way of preventing a similar epidemic is by including measles in the schedule adopted.

The thanks of the Council are due to the ministers of religion in the borough for their ready co-operation in trying to stamp out the epidemic by closing the Sunday Schools.

With regard to sanitary shortcomings, we have still not a few, and, in addition to those already mentioned, I would like to urge the immediate making of certain private streets in the borough, such as Belfield-street, Victoria-street, and at least a dozen more ; many of these streets, after heavy rains, are veritable swamps, and are often made considerably worse by the inhabitants throwing refuse matter on to them. This is a matter which requires the immediate attention of the Council.

It is to be hoped that the Health Committee will persevere with the Destructor question, and adopt this much-needed means of refuse disposal.

I have the honour to remain,

Yours obediently,

J. G. WILLIS, M.O.H.

Litham

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